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A
Moral Reflection,
ON THE
SUDDEN DEATH
OF THE TWO
Miss VISSCHERS,
DAUGHTERS OF
Col. JOHN VISSCHER,
OF GREEN-BUSH,

*Who were unfortunately DROWNED in the River
Hudson, March 15, 1790.*

Very respectfully INSCRIBED to the
DISCONSOLATE MOURNERS,

By their sympathizing FRIEND,

J. T.

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A MORAL REFLECTION.

IN soft retreat, where tho'tless mortals roam
And look for any thing but Death to come,
I walk'd to hold a parly with the foe,
The King of Terrors ere he strike the blow;
The fatal blow which I cannot evade,
For I must wander through the dreary shade:
Sudden or slow, the period is not far,
And no discharge can free me from that war.
Say, grisly monarch! can you stop and see,
Old age grown weary of the world like me;
In nature's garden leave the tender bloom,
And take the withering fruit-tree in its room!
Ah! no; you triumph o'er this earthly stage,
Nor value rank, nor title, sex or age.
Here startled from my reverie—What mean
Those piercing shrieks! O terrifying scene!
The ghastly tyrant, at his awful feet,
Wraps numbers in one liquid winding sheet.
The river Hudson—where the sporting gale,
Plays in the swelling bosom of the sail,
And wings the vessels back and forth, to bear
From distant port to port—from fair to fair
The farmer's fruit (a life supporting load;)
The merchant's treasure, & the passing crowd.
Here winter, in his turn, dominion claims,
And sends his frost and iron-binds the streams;
Covers the river with a sheet, of glass,
And forms a bridge—for travellers to pass.
For weeks, for months the jostling numbers go,
Nor fear the liquid death that rolls below;
But the returning sun now darts his beams—
The chains that bind the surface of the streams

Grow slack, and lose their captivating force ;
 The waters struggle for their wonted course.
 A friendly party on excursion tries
 The flattering bosom of the faithless ice :
 Too late ! alas ! the weaken'd bridge gives
 Beneath the burden of the loaded sleigh. [way,
 Distressing sight ! here sinking in the tide,
 The blooming Virgin ! the beloved Bride !
 The man of honor and benevolence,
 'Twixt life & death—one moment in suspense,
 Important moment ! by whose single thread !
 They must be sav'd ! or mingle with the dead !
 The cords that bind the body to the soul,
 By mystic sympathy untie the whole.
 This I would save—with that I cannot part—
 This on my garment—that upon my heart—
 Embarrass'd thus, the men do scarce obtain,
 A treacherous footing on the ice again,
 With each a female—nor recover breath,
 To speak their joy, at their escape from death,
 Their passions and their powers must all attend
 On the one sinking, struggling, dying friend !
 O ! see my sister dear ! the fair one cries,
 Then ventures to the margin of the ice ;
 Blended with love her sister's life to save,
 Plunges and joins her in her wat'ry grave !
 Rens'laer ! who feels his breast with pity glow,
 Strives to prevent such complicated woe :
 His footing fails—he sinks beneath the stream
 Helpless, hopeless—lost, just lost with them.
 But death, for once, discrimination makes:
 All captur'd—this he leaves, and that he takes.
 Equally fallen in his fatal snares,
 This he retains a prisoner, that he spares.
 Sets a mean instrument,* that we despise,

* We are sorry the author did not convey his ideas in milder terms
 than "a mean instrument," &c. for a man of colour.

[eyes.

To snatch him back to life when he had clos'd his
 Once more, dear sir, let Heaventy bosom move,
 With pitying sympathy, if not with love :
 Your life was lost, for those you could not save,
 He set you free from death—go free the slave ;
 Then turn your thoughts a moment, and review
 Those that no mortal power could save with you.
 Dear, hapless pair, in love so firmly tied,
 That death could not the sacred band divide.
 In thee we saw the lovely graces meet,
 Enchanting beauty, innocently sweet :
 In life, we did with pleasing wonder gaze,
 Your death would make us frantic in your
 But we forbear—Impenetrable night [praise.
 Hath buried all your charms from mortal sight.
 Till the same voice, that call'd you from our
 Shall order you as sudden to arise ; [eyes,
 May your immortal graces then appear
 Lovely to angels, as to us while here.
 Let youth take warning by this sudden fall,
 And be admonish'd at so loud a call.
 May their young feet in wisdom's paths be found
 Youth always tread upon enchanted ground :
 May such disasters, that are every year
 Presented to our eye or to our ear,
 Caution us not to trifle with, or brave,
 The dangers that are planted round the grave ;
 Nor sport with death, nor tempt the mortal
 To hurl us prematurely to our end. [fiend
 Is any thing so lovely in his face
 That we should run to meet his cold embrace !
 Life is an innate, vital spark we strive
 To lengthen after we shall cease to live.
 When dandled on the lap of Providence
 Enjoying all the sweets of time and sense,
 The inventory of our portion here,

Mentions no disappointment, grief nor care,
 In future generations, pleas'd, we see
 Ourselves stretch'd out to immortality,
 Till death cuts off the thread; before our eyes,
 Our expectations with our offspring dies :
 But GOD is just, and all his ways are right,
 Tho' like his essence, hid from mortal sight.
 Perhaps our children might out-live their fame,
 And then our very souls would die with shame :
 In bloom of youth and virtue, he alone
 Knows best how to dispose of what's his own :
 He sees 'tis necessary here to try
 The truth of virtue and adversity.
 Our part is to adore him, and be still—
 To mourn—but in submission to his will.
 Life is a state of trial;—he obtains [gains.
 The brightest crown, who greatest conquest
 Could we restrain our passions from excess,
 When they on transitory objects press.
 Elate with pleasure or depress'd with pain
 Let reason and religion hold the rein—
 All other conquests thus would be ensured,
 And all our trials easily endured.
 When passions govern we must quit the field,
 Or fight without a weapon or a shield.
 But shall we steel our bosom and deny
 The human exercise of grief and joy?—
 Have blessings both continued and renew'd,
 Without a noble pang of gratitude?—
 Or with our tenderest enjoyments part,
 And feel no palpitation of the heart? [groan,
 The brutes might shame us with abhorrant
 And nature shrink from monsters not her own.
 'Tis laudable the friendly tear to shed,
 In tribute to the memory of the dead—
 'Tis human nature in simplicity,

To feel our own and share in other's joy :
 In time of grief, with heart and tongue to lend
 A cup of consolation to a friend.
 Permit the friendly muse to count and guess
 What you have lost by what you did possess :
 The father sees the image stamp'd anew,
 That in his youth his soft affections drew ;
 The mother, with ineffable delight,
 Has all herself presented to her sight :
 Her infant innocence, her childish toys,
 Her natal pride, that virtue justifies :
 Prudence, that every female virtue decks,
 Her modesty, the safeguard of her sex ;
 Her sweet deportment and her decent mien,
 By her, by all, is here with pleasure seen
 Mature in one—the other buding forth,
 Promising the rich fruit of female worth.
 The sacred covenant of marriage here,
 Engage the daughter—those the parents' care ;
 The happy, envy'd youth, beholds with pride,
 And triumphs in his amiable bride ;
 Looks forward thro' the pleasing scenes of life,
 All are concenter'd in a future wife,
 While num'rous friends anticipate their joy,
 And claim a share in their felicity.
 All blasted ! all their joys are at an end !
 The bride ! the daughter ! the beloved friend !
 With the young sister, valuably dear,
 Drop from the stage of life ! and disappear !
 Not one preparatory moment given !
 To bid the earth adieu ! or welcome heaven !
 And are they gone !—and shall we never hear
 The lovely voice that charm'd our list'ning ear ?
 For ever gone ! they no sweet farewell gave,
 The cutting pain of absence to relieve.
 This is too much ! my bosom bleeds anew,

I need your pity, while I pity you.
 Once and again grief has my heart beguil'd—
 Once and again—I had—I lost a child.
 I know your loss—your every pang I feel—
 Long since, death gave a wound time cannot
 heal :

With a dear—dear one, I was call'd to part,
 Dear as the sacred veils that wrap my heart ;
 Trembling, I heard the awful fiat given,
 The sentence wore the privy-seal of Heaven ;
 I saw the minister of death appear,
 Paler than usual—shake his baleful spear,
 Then paus'd—and seem'd to say with horrid
 “ Must I destroy so many lives in one, [groan,
 “ In that sweet bosom plunge this mortal
 blade ?”

He turn'd his face and trembled, but obey'd.
 Nothing of me but grief did then survive,
 Deaf to the friendly counsel now I give,
 Till passion wearied out with fruitless moan,
 Sunk into sleep and reason took her throne,
 Let reason now over our passions reign,
 While I am call'd to mourn with you again :
 May we their loss with moderation weep,
 We cannot wake them from their icy sleep ;
 With deep repining and excessive moan
 We alter not their fate—but urge our own.
 The time is hasting that will clearly shew
 Infinite wisdom held the silken clue, [where
 That led through the dark winding mazes,
 We trip'd on joys or stumbled over care ;
 Till then we'll let his dark decrees alone,
 Set down and calmly say, **THY WILL BE**

DONE. 20 JY 64

F I N I S.

